## THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

(Version by Alice Corbin Henderson)

Many years ago there lived an Emperor who thought so much of new clothes that he spent all his money on them. He did not care for his soldiers; he did not care to go to the theater. He liked to drive out in the park only that he might show off his new clothes. He had a coat for every hour of the day. They usually say of a king, "He is in the council chamber." But of the Emperor they said, "He is in the clothes closet!"

It was a gay city in which the Emperor lived. And many strangers came to visit it every day. Among these, one day, there came two rogues who set themselves up as weavers. They said they knew how to weave the most beautiful cloths imaginable. And not only were the colors and patterns used remarkably beautiful, but clothes made from this cloth could not be seen by any one who was unfit for the office he held or was too stupid for any use.

"Those would be fine clothes!" thought the Emperor. "If I wore those I could find out what men in my empire were not fit for the places they held. I could tell the clever men from the dunces! I must have some clothes woven for me at once!"

So he gave the two rogues a great deal of money that they might begin their work at once.

The rogues immediately put up two looms and pretended to be working. But there was nothing at all on their looms. They called for the finest silks and the brightest gold, but this they put into their pockets. At the empty looms they worked steadily until late into the night.

"I should like to know how the weavers are getting on with my clothes," thought the Emperor.

But he felt a little uneasy when he thought that any one who was stupid or was not fit for his office would be unable to see the cloth. Of course he had no fears for himself; but still he thought he would send some one else first, just to see how matters stood.

"I will send my faithful old Minister to the weavers," thought the Emperor. "He can see how the stuff looks, for he is a clever man, and no one is so careful in fulfilling duties as he is!"

So the good old Minister went into the room where the two rogues sat working at the empty looms.

"Mercy on us!" thought the old Minister, opening his eyes wide, "I can't see a thing!" But he didn't care to say so.

Both the rascals begged him to be good enough to step a little nearer. They pointed to the empty looms and asked him if he did not think the pattern and the coloring wonderful. The poor old Minister stared and stared as hard as he could, but he could not see anything, for, of course, there was nothing to see!

"Mercy!" he said to himself. "Is it possible that I am a dunce? I never thought so! Certainly no one must know it. Am I unfit for office? It will never do to say that I cannot see the stuff!"

"Well, sir, why do you say nothing of it?" asked the rogue who was pretending to weave.

"Oh, it is beautiful—charming!" said the old Minister, peering through his spectacles. "What a fine pattern, and what wonderful colors! I shall tell the Emperor that I am very much pleased with it."

"Well, we are glad to hear you say so," answered the two swindlers.

Then they named all the colors of the invisible cloth upon the looms, and described the peculiar pattern. The old Minister listened intently, so that he could repeat all that was said of it to the Emperor.

The rogues now began to demand more money, more silk, and more gold thread in order to proceed with the weaving. All of this, of course, went into their pockets. Not a single strand was ever put on the empty looms at which they went on working.

The Emperor soon sent another faithful friend to see how soon the new clothes would be ready. But he fared no better than the Minister. He looked and looked and looked, but still saw nothing but the empty looms.

"Isn't that a pretty piece of stuff?" asked both rogues, showing and explaining the handsome pattern which was not there at all.

"I am not stupid!" thought the man. "It must be that I am not worthy of my good position. That is, indeed, strange. But I must not let it be known!"

So he praised the cloth he did not see, and expressed his approval of the color and the design that were not there. To the Emperor he said, "It is charming!"

Soon everybody in town was talking about the wonderful cloth that the two rogues were weaving.

The Emperor began to think now that he himself would like to see the wonderful cloth while it was still on the looms. Accompanied by a number of his friends, among whom were the two faithful officers who had already beheld the imaginary stuff, he went to visit the two men who were weaving, might and main, without any fiber and without any thread.

"Isn't it splendid!" cried the two statesmen who had already been there, and who thought the others would see something upon the empty looms. "Look, your Majesty! What colors! And what a design!"

"What's this?" thought the Emperor. "I see nothing at all! Am I a dunce? Am I not fit to be Emperor? That would be the worst thing that could happen to me, if it were true."

"Oh, it is very pretty!" said the Emperor aloud. "It has my highest approval!"

He nodded his head happily, and stared at the empty looms. Never would he say that he could see nothing!

His friends, too, gazed and gazed, but saw no more than had the others. Yet they all cried out, "It is beautiful!" and advised the Emperor to wear a suit made of this cloth in a great procession that was soon to take place.

"It is magnifiecnt, gorgeous!" was the cry that went from mouth to mouth. The Emperor gave each of the rogues a royal ribbon to wear in his buttonhole, and called them the Imperial Court Weavers.

The rogues were up the whole night before the morning of the procession. They kept more than sixteen candles burning. The people could see them hard at work, completing the new clothes of the Emperor. They took yards of stuff down from the empty looms; they made cuts in the air with big scissors; they sewed with needles without thread; and, at last, they said, "The clothes are ready!"

The Emperor himself, with his grandest courtiers, went to put on his new suit.

"See!" said the rogues, lifting their arms as if holding something. "Here are the trousers! Here is the coat! Here is the cape!" and so on. "It is as light as a spider's web. One might think one had nothing on. But that is just the beauty of it!"

"Very nice," said the courtiers. But they could see nothing; for there *was* nothing!

"Will your Imperial Majesty be graciously pleased to take off your clothes," asked the rogues, "so that we may put on the new ones before this long mirror?"

The Emperor took off all his own clothes, and the two rogues pretended to put on each new garment as it was ready. They wrapped him about, and they tied and they buttoned. The Emperor turned round and round before the mirror.

"How well his Majesty looks in his new clothes!" said the people. "How becoming they are! What a pattern! What colors! It is a beautiful dress!"

"They are waiting outside with the canopy which is to be carried over your Majesty in the procession," said the master of ceremonies.

"I am ready," said the Emperor. "Don't the clothes fit well?" he asked, giving a last glance into the mirror as though he were looking at all his new finery.

The men who were to carry the train of the Emperor's cloak stooped down to the floor as if picking up the train, and then held it high in the air. They did not dare let it be known that they could see nothing.

So the Emperor marched along under the bright canopy. Everybody in the streets and at the windows cried out: "How beautiful the Emperor's new clothes are! What a fine train! And they fit to perfection!"

No one would let it be known that he could see nothing, for that would have proved that he was unfit for office or that he was very, very stupid. None of the Emperor's clothes had ever been as successful as these.

"But he has nothing on!" said a little child.

"Just listen to the innocent!" said its father.

But one person whispered to another what the child had said. "He has nothing on! A child says he has nothing on!"

"But he has nothing on!" at last cried all the people.

The Emperor writhed, for he knew that this was true. But he realized that it would never do to stop the procession. So he held himself stiffer than ever, and the chamberlains carried the invisible train.

194

In his story "The Nightingale," Andersen suggests that the so-called upper class of society may become so conventionalized as to be unable to appreciate true beauty. Poor fishermen and the little kitchen girl in the story recognize the beauty of the exquisite song of the nightingale, and Andersen shows his regard for royalty by having the emperor appreciate it twice. The last part of the story is especially impressive. When Death approached the emperor and took from him the symbols that had made him rank above his fellows, the emperor saw the realities of life and again perceived the beauty of the nightingale's song. This contact with real life made Death shrink away. Then the emperor learned Andersen's message to artificial society: If you would behold true beauty, you must have it in your own heart.